

1996 CROCUS GROUP SPRING NEWSLETTER

Hon. Secretary's Notes

I suddenly decided in the middle of last night that it was time I handed over the job of Hon. Sec. of the Crocus Group to someone with access to modern machinery. We now have 112 members and the actual paperwork takes me too long. Please volunteer to take it on

I am afraid we need another £5 from all members who joined before 1995. I last asked for £5 in the autumn of 1993. Anyone who joined in 1995 will have paid £5 joining fee and I do not ask them for further cash. I see no reason for instituting an annual subscription at the moment. There is a form in this Newsletter which please could you complete and send to me with a cheque made out to the Crocus Group which now has a bank account.

Primrose Warburg

Sunday 18th February 1996

Ray Cobb who is still the NCCPG National Crocus collection holder (until he has handed over more of his collection) has an Open Day on Sunday 18th February, 10.30am onwards. Crocus Group members welcome. It may be necessary to park near shops, 100 yards North of his house.

Mr & Mrs R COBB
"AURELIA"
188 Bramcote Lane, WOLLATON
NOTTINGHAM NG8 2QN
Tel: 0115 928 1525

Tuesday 20th February 1996

Annual Crocus Lecture and Auction of members' spare corms. Lecture will be given by David King who was prevented by urgent business at the last moment from speaking to us last year. Lecture in RHS Orchid Room will be at 5pm followed by Auction. Please bring all you can spare to swell crocus group funds and buy generously.

Sunday 24th February 1996

We are invited to visit the well-known garden of Mr D HAZELGROVE at PELHAM HOUSE, BRENT PELHAM, BUNTINGFORD, HERTS, SG9 0HH. Come at 11am and bring a packed lunch. Please telephone 01279 727473 if you intend to come.

The nearby nursery, Cambridge Bulbs will be open in the afternoon specially for anyone who would like to go on there after lunch.

Saturday 16th March 1996

Meet at 11am at gate into the INKPEN crocus field. It is an SSSI, owned and managed by the local Naturalist Trust, BBONT. The field is thick with Crocus vernus and it is a most astonishing sight. The flowers are of various different patterns but all are small like wild crocuses. No one seems to be certain of their origin.

I suggest that we make a small collection for the Trust amongst those who come to see the field. Crocus vernus is also naturalized near Nottingham and I thought it would be interesting to visit that site for comparison in 1997.

Inkpen is a village south west of Newbury, Berks. From Newbury take A4 and turn left just over a mile past the HALFWAY pub, signposted Inkpen and Kintbury. Take 2nd left in Kintbury village. After a mile turn right at cross-roads and continue till you reach the Recreation Ground car park. Park there, walk 200 yards down Pottery Lane, a track on right just past Recreation Ground. You should by then be at the Reserve. If I can find it myself I will try and put up signs saying something appropriate like "Here be Crocuses".

If you wish to continue to receive Crocus Group bulletins, please complete this form and send it to me with a cheque for £5, made out to the Crocus Group, at the address below. Could overseas members please send an International Money Order or Eurocheque for £5 - postage is included. If you joined the Crocus Group in 1995 or 1996 ignore this.

NAME (in capital letters)

ADDRESS (in capital letters)

.....

.....

Thank you

Mrs P Warburg
South Hayes
Yarnells Hill
Oxford
OX2 9BG
Tel: (01865) 247883

CROCUS NOTES FROM BRIAN MATHEW - 1995

As the present editor of Curtis's Botanical Magazine, that venerable periodical which appeared in 1787 and has continued without a break, I look through the index from time to time to see if there are any obvious gaps to fill. Not a difficult task, since there are an estimated quarter-of-a-million species of plant in the world (not counting subspecies, varieties and forms, and all the other variants which we often regard as different for horticultural purposes) and the 'Bot. Mag.' has illustrated just 10,000 or so. So, there is a long way to go before it is complete and I just hope that future publishers will see wisdom and continue to produce this, the longest-running magazine of its kind. Needless to say, I have looked at the list of Crocus species to see what has been published, although I have not yet had the time to check each one to see if it is exactly what it is supposed to be; this should happen fairly soon, though. To date, the following definitely appear to have been illustrated [t. = tabula, or plate number; N.S. = New Series]:

alatavicus (N.S.t.692), ancyrensis (N.S.t.99), angustifolius (t.652), antalyensis (N.S.t.629), banaticus (t.6141), baytopiorum (N.S.t.664), biflorus alexandri (t.7740), biflorus biflorus (t.845), biflorus crewei (t.6168), biflorus nubigena (N.S.t.235), biflorus weldenii (t.6211), cvjicii (N.S.t.721), cancellatus (t.6103, 9044), carpetanus (N.S.t.711), chrysanthus (t.6162, N.S.t.182), cyprius (N.S.t.675), dalmaticus (N.S.t.617), etruscus (t.6362), flavus (t.45, 938, 2655, 2986, 3869), fleischeri (t.6176B), gargaricus (N.S.t.703), goulimy (N.S.t.354), imperati suaveolens (t.3864), korolokowii (t.6852A), kotschyanus (t.9044), laevigatus (t.9515), malyi (t.7590), micelsonii (N.S.t.606), nevadensis (N.S.439), niveus (N.S.t.146), nudiflorus (N.S.t.169), ochroleucus (t.5297), olivieri (N.S.t.639), serotinus salzmännii (t.6000), sieberi (N.S.t.340), sieheanus (t.9583), speciosus (t.3861), vallicola (N.S.t.424), veneris (t.9515), versicolor (t.1110), vernus vernus (napolitanus) (t.860), vernus vernus (Heuffelianus) (t.6197), vitellinus (t.6416). More on these in the future when I have checked them out; there may be a few others.

reticulatus N.S.t. 736

As can be seen from this rather crude list, about 38 species have been illustrated, plus a few subspecies. The total tally of Crocus species currently stands at about 83, and well over 100 if subspecies are included, so there must be at least 45 species yet to be painted and written up for the Magazine. Even if, on average, two crocuses per year were included it would take over 20 years to complete. The Bot. Mag. publishes 24 plant portraits each year, covering representatives of the whole world's flora, so two of any genus in a year is pushing it a bit! However, the sooner a start is made the better and I hope to include some more in the next two years.

At a glance, the most obvious omission is *C. tommasinianus* but as there are other notable exceptions from the list like *C. boryi*, *C. cambessedesii*, *C. cartwrightianus*, *C. caspius*, *C. corsicus*, *C. hadriaticus*, *C. karduchorum*, *C. longiflorus*, *C. medius*, *C. pallasii* forms, *C. pulchellus*, *C. robertianus* and *C. scardicus*. A few of these may have been covered but are lurking as synonyms. One possible way of speeding up the coverage is to include several related species on one plate, with a general discussion about their relationships; something to put to the management, perhaps?

CROCUS GROUP SEED EXCHANGE 1996

The time has come yet again to urge all members of the Crocus Group to take up their paintbrush and go forth and pollinate.

Quite by accident (with me running it) we appear to have one of the most successful seed exchanges of any of the specialist plant societies. This is the fifth year of the exchange, and each year has seen an increase in the number of members participating, and an increase in the taxa offered. Last year we offered 136 lots of seed representing 70 different taxa and 30% of the members took part either as donors, non-donors or both.

We also routinely list seed of the newly described and other rare taxa, which are difficult to obtain, if at all. These, as with most other crocus, are relatively easy to grow from seed and this affords the cheapest and possibly the only way of obtaining them.

So, let me remind you all once again of the simplest rules of any seed exchange:-

1. If you want a copy of the seed list send a SAE to me before 31st July 1996 (overseas members need not stamp the envelope).
2. If you are donating seed send this to me before 31st July 1996; you will automatically receive a seed list and first chance at the seeds.

David Stephens, Sherwood, Bunce Common Road, Leigh, Surrey RH2 8NS.

GIBBERELLINS NOT REQUIRED

It came as a great relief to me to discover that the method I have always adopted for growing Crocus from seed is also the most effective.

This is the opinion of Norman C Deno and I guess there cannot be many of us who by now are not using the methods he has proved by many years of scientific research and practical experiment.

Unlike the growers of numerous other genera which require chemical, physical or other intervention methods to break seed dormancy, we of the Crocus persuasion have an easy time.

Crocus have almost the simplest germination regime of any plant. In Norm's words, they are 70/40 germinators. Seed will begin to germinate after a three month damp period at 70 deg F as soon as they are brought into 40 deg F.

I have always sown Crocus seed as soon as it is ripe, and have found that germination automatically follows with the lowered temperatures of autumn and winter. So, no fancy methods for us, just sow in summer, water the pots and wait for winter.